DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 065 070 HE 003 210

TITLE Proposal for the Establishment of an Undergraduate Minor in Humanities at Rhode Island College.
INSTITUTION Rhode Island Coll., Providence.
PUB DATE [69]
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; *Educational Innovation; *Higher Education; *Humanities; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Relevance (Education); Student Needs

ABSTRACT

In order to permit a wider degree of flexibility and choice in the curriculum, to enable students to engage in interdepartmental training, to encourage reading and discussion of primary texts that have thematic and personal relevance to students, and to encourage broad, generalized inquiry at a time when specialization is dominant, this proposal for the establishment of a minor in the humanities at Rhode Island College is offered. The courses offered within the minor should all be exclusively reading and discussions seminars with no term papers, lectures, or examinations. Grading should be on a pass-fail basis with evaluation based on classroom participation and attendance. Faculty for the program should be chosen from a pool of faculty dedicated to the ideals of the program in the departments of English, history, sociology, art, science, and philosophy. It is hoped that this new offering will solve the need for relevance as has been expressed by the students at the college. (HS)

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Proposal for the Establishment of an Undergraduate Minor in Humanities at Rhode Island College

Introduction: The widespread concern throughout the Colleges and Universities of the United States for significant reforms in curriculum has its place here at Rhode Island College. As students concerned with the developing curriculums here at the College, we offer what we believe to be a proposal designed to meet much of the sincere criticism of our current offerings. We feel that meaningful change can come that provides a greater degree of student responsibility for academic excellence, while at the same time, creates a liberating atmosphere in which students and faculty might encourage increased communication regarding the issues, ideas and events that shape our lives both past and present. We believe that this proposal can and should be adopted, if only as an experiment, to demonstrate to our students that good faith does exist between administration, faculty, and students. Some of the provisions might raise an academic eyebrow here and there, but if a College cannot say yes to innovation then the entire purpose of our efforts becomes suspect. What we are saying is that out of the 128 hours of required credit we are asked to complete, that a small portion of that credit should be made available for the purpose of encouraging intellectual inquiry that has not been pigeonholed into the usual format of college departmentalization, testing, and specialization. We plead for a recognized interdepartmental program beyond our present general education offerings and for the opportunity to engage in an academic experience that provides a maximum range of flexibility. To be sure there are dangers in what we propose, but the failure will be ours and the responsibility will be ours. To those who say that the "Establishment" cannot

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change, we say that the "Establishment" is a fiction created by those who cannot, or will not seek cooperative change within the framework of the institution to which we are all committed.

Justification:

1. To permit a wider degree of flexibility and choice in the curriculum.
2. To enable students the opportunity to continue work in an interdepartmental discipline beyond our present general education offering. The Minor will provide students the opportunity to continue work in comparative literature, art, history, philosophy, science -- any field that has bearing upon the proposed themes and problems.
3. To open-up an area of study at the College which transcends the boundaries of our present specialized departments and emphasizes "synthetic" skills.
4. To make possible for the first time on campus the chance to experiment with the validity of a program not dependent upon examinations, written formal term papers, or grades.
5. To encourage reading and discussion of primary texts that have thematic and personal relevance to the student.
6. To permit faculty and student cooperative planning of the readings and topics.
7. To encourage broad, generalized inquiry at a time when specialization is dominant.
8. To provide the chance for students with varied skills and interests to come together with their peers in a way that encourage student responsibility.

Proposal: By September 1969 (Fall Semester), Rhode Island College should offer a Minor in Humanities. The Minor should consist of a minimum of 18 hours semester credit beyond the general education requirements established by the College.

Structure of the Program:

1. All Humanities courses offered in the Minor, should be exclusively reading and discussion seminars. No lectures, papers, or classroom examinations will be required. Students are responsible for attending each class, beyond this, students will be evaluated solely on classroom participation in the discussion of the texts and themes. Evaluation will be made on a "pass-fail" basis. A grade of "pass" means the student, in the judgement of the instructor, has attended regularly and engaged in vocal combat with his peers. High priority, then, is placed on classroom participation. Where a student fails to attend and talk, he will receive a grade of "Fail". Students wishing to present talks or forums with other students should plan such activities cooperatively with the instructor. Papers will be accepted if they are intended to be presented to the entire class and if they are pertinent to the discussions and themes.

Students wishing translation of the pass-fail grades to "A" through "F" grading pattern should petition the registrar who will keep on file a "double-ledger" of grades. This procedure should satisfy whatever records students and the College should need for Graduate School purposes. It should be clearly understood that the pass-fail will remain the standard grading pattern for the Humanities Minor. Students will not be permitted to request a letter grade for the pur-

pose of improving their index. The Humanities program should be kept independent of the index kept by the College as is presently the case with student teaching.

2. Reading will primarily consist of "primary" rather than "secondary" texts.

3. Humanities seminars should carry a 3 credit hour student load and 3 hours faculty load.

4. Faculty teaching in the program should be chosen from a "faculty-pool" of those committed to the goals and purposes of the program. This would mean that faculty electing to teach in the proposed Humanities sequence could come from the various departments of English, History, Sociology, Art, Science, and Philosophy.

5. Although it will be necessary to establish a broad, general structure to the themes and topics to be included in the Humanities sequence, the specific themes, texts, and topics to be included in each seminar will be determined by the students and faculty member teaching the seminar. This will entail meetings considerably in advance of the semester in which the seminar is to be offered. For example, students pre-registered in the fall semester for the Spring could arrange to plan cooperatively with the seminar instructor the substance of the next seminar. It should be understood that each seminar, beginning with the first, will devote some of its time to the considering of the direction the next course will take. This will enable students and faculty to pursue their own unique academic strengths and weaknesses rather than commit the program to a pre-ordained structure which is unacceptable to those students taking the seminar and the instructor teaching it.

7. The Humanities seminars will be based upon "core" readings done by all students to provide the course with a unity of purpose, but "optional" readings will be encouraged as well so that each student will be permitted the chance to develop his interests as they relate to the topics and themes.

8. Although the major focus of the Humanities Minor will be the 20th century, students will be required to take two seminars in another cultural period.

Course Offerings:

1. Six seminar offerings should be created carrying course numbers from Humanities 301, to Humanities 306. Courses must be taken sequentially in order to insure continuity of development to each seminar and to insure the principle of cooperative planning for each successive semester. Students registering in the Spring then, must have a Fall seminar as a pre-requisite.

2. The following represents the sequence of course offerings for those students who have completed the general education requirements in Humanities:

Humanities 301 (Fall, 1969): The Humanities and Contemporary Life. This Course represents an in-depth examination into the Philosophic, Aesthetic, Social and Political, and Historical problems of modern society. Themes and topics to be considered will cover the problems of fact and value arising from the conflict of the Sciences and the Humanities, Alienation, Collectivism, and Mechanization, Political Revolution and Social Order.

Humanities 302, (Spring, 1970): The Crisis in the Humanities. This course represents a continuation of the themes and directions taken with regard to those problems raised in Humanities,

301, with a special emphasis upon the relationship of these problems to the individual goal, values, and aspirations of students. Topics and problems will be concerned with such problems as the validity of the Humanities in modern society, the role of the student and the university, the possibility of committment in modern society, Education and Utopia.

Humanities 303, (Fall, 1970): Humanities and Comparative Culture. This course seeks to examine the relationship of snother major culture period with special regard to its pertinence to contemporary society. Such periods as Classical Greece, The Medieval Age, The Renaissance, The Elizabethan Society, Neo-Classicism and Romanticism may be selected to develop, compare and contrast to the modern age.

Humanities 304, (Spring, 1971): Humanities and Comparative Culture. This course represents a continuation of the principles of Humanities 303. It will undertake a close examination of a second culture (selected from such periods as Greek, Medieval, etc.) with regard to its intellectual, social, and aesthetic foundations and its implications and relationship to modern society.

Humanities 305(Spring, 1970): Problems in Humanities. This course will seek to develop topics and readings with special attention to those issues arising out of the two twentieth century and cultural area seminars. Students will be encouraged to determine the shape and direction of the seminar themes, topics, and readings with respect to their own background and interests.

Humanities 306 (Spring, 1971): Problems in Humanities. This course represents a continuation of Humanities 305.